

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 10

Lifesaver

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:16
Subject:	what you should not do
Complement:	bear false witness against your neighbor
Exegetical idea:	You should not bear false witness against your neighbor
Homiletical idea:	God wants you to be a lifesaver!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be faithful witnesses who save lives rather than false witness who bring only hurt and pain.

Introduction

Some of you may remember the country version of the 10 commandments that I found in the little store in Mount Dora. I quoted one of those country 10 commandments when we studied the 3rd commandment. “No cussin’”. There was more to the 3rd commandment than that. But that was a start: No cussin’! You can watch that entire message online at www.forestlakechurch.org.

Well, the country version of the 9th commandment also caught my attention. We are studying the 9th commandment today. The country version of the 9th commandment was: No Fibbin’. Do we have any country folk here who know what “No fibbin’” means? That’s right! No lying. I looked up the word “fibbing” in an online dictionary and here’s the definition I found: fibbing - lying or being deliberately unclear. No fibbin’.

Is that an accurate summary of the 9th commandment? Well, let’s look for ourselves, in Exodus 20:16. The NIV translates the 9th commandment with these words: “You shall not give a false testimony against your neighbor.” The KJV reads, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” The Hebrew adjective translated “false” literally means lying or untrue. Literally, you shall not give a lying testimony, a lying witness.

Deuteronomy 5:20 also says “You shall not give false testimony” but the Hebrew adjective also translated “false” is a different word from the one used in Exodus 20:16. This word means “empty” or “frivolous.” You shall not give an empty or frivolous witness.

I think that the country version was quite accurate! No fibbin’. Don’t lie or be deliberately unclear in your witness against your neighbor. Did you know that giving a false witness is something that the LORD hates? In Proverbs 6:16, we read that there are 6 things the LORD hates. Yes, seven are an abomination to Him. And one of those things that the LORD hates is found in Proverbs 6:19a: “a false witness who pours out lies..” While the setting for this commandment is a court of law, it is certainly true that God hates lying of every kind. In fact, in the restatement of the commandment in Lev 19:11, it simply states “Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.”

Why does the LORD our God feel so strongly about giving a false witness against your neighbor? Why does He hate that behavior? Let me suggest at least two reasons why God hates false testimony. Firstly, God is truth, and God loves truth. Jesus, the Son of God, declared, “I am the Truth!” And John the Baptist described the Son of God as “full of ...truth.” So God who is Truth hates falsehood of every kind. That’s one reason why God hates false testimony.

But there is at least one more reason why God hates it when someone gives false testimony against his neighbor. God loves that neighbor. God loves all of His children, including you. And a false testimony hurts a person....unjustly. And God hates that. Because God loves all of His children.

That’s why God hates giving a false testimony. Did you know that giving a false testimony not only includes speaking falsehood against your neighbor but also failing to speak

truth in your neighbor's defense? Failing to speak truth in your neighbor's defense is also a transgression of the 9th commandment. Listen to these words of Scripture, recorded in Leviticus 5:1. "If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible." The sin of silence is just as much a transgression as the sin of false speech.

Someone might say, "It specifically says, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." "Don't give an untrue testimony, don't testify in an insincere way against your neighbor." Who is my neighbor? Is it just the person who lives right next door to me? Is that my only neighbor. Does this 9th commandment relate only to my interaction with that person? What about the person who lives across the street, or on the other side of town? Is that person my neighbor too? Who is my neighbor?

What the answer to that question? Who is your neighbor? Someone asked Jesus that question. Who is my neighbor? Luke 10:29 He answered not with a definition but with a story. We call that story "The Good Samaritan." You might want to read that story later today. It's found in Luke 10:29-37. The answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" is this: Anyone who is in need. And how many of us on this planet called earth have needs? All of us. So we are all neighbors to each other! And if we are going to live in harmony with this 9th word of blessing from our loving God, we will not give a lying testimony against anyone!

Jesus faced many false witnesses during his life on earth. When He performed many marvelous miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, lying witnesses testified against Him. On one occasion, when Jesus healed a man who was blind and mute, and under the control of an evil spirit, lying witnesses said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives

out demons.” Matthew 12:24 They called the work of God the work of the devil. That was a lying testimony, a false witness. And Jesus said, “That is an unforgivable sin!” Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:31. “I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”

Jesus encountered lying witnesses at His mockery of a trial. We read in Matthew 26:59-61, “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

That was an empty testimony. A lying witness. Jesus never said that. Jesus never said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.” What did Jesus say? Does anyone remember? It was right after He cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His ministry. He was asked by what authority He did those things. And Jesus responded, recorded in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” He wasn’t even referring to the Temple in Jerusalem. He was referring to His own body! But lying witnesses testified against Him.

And the priests, including the High Priest, they were also giving a false witness by their silence. They were also lying witnesses. They knew the truth about Jesus. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders had this to say about Jesus: “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him...” John 11:47-48a. They knew the truth about Jesus. But they remained silent at His trial. They were also lying witnesses.

And these religious leaders treated the followers of Jesus the same way. Stephen the deacon was so full of power and so full of the Holy Spirit that no one could refute the power of his testimony about Jesus! And so, Acts 6:11-14 records, Acts 6:11-14, “Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.’” That was a lying testimony. Notice that the religious leaders had to secretly persuade some men to say that. The record continues in Acts 6:12-14, “So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.’” That was a false testimony. A lying witness. But based on that lying testimony and Stephen’s bold response to it, those religious leaders stoned Stephen to death.

Those individuals who gave a lying testimony against Jesus and a lying testimony against the deacon Stephen will have to answer before the LORD our God in the day of judgment. And so will any person who bears false witness and does not repent and turn from his or her sin. The wise man Solomon declared that “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.” Proverbs 19:5 And again in Proverbs 21:28, “A false witness will perish...”

If the message ended here, we would have heard truth, but we wouldn’t leave very encouraged. And we would also be left wondering why the sermon title was Lifesaver and what this lifesaver, this life preserver was doing up here at the platform. Well, the reason for the lifesaver, and the word of encouragement is found in Proverbs 14:25. “A truthful witness saves

lives...” (A true witness delivereth souls) A lying witness wounds. A lying witness damages. A lying witness can bring death. But a truthful witness saves lives!

I want to be a Lifesaver! What about you? I want to save lives by giving a truthful witness. That means that I will refuse to compromise. I will speak the truth even if it means sacrifice. I will speak the truth even if it means loss. I will refuse to remain silent when there is truth that must be heard. And that commitment must go beyond a court of law. That commitment to be a truthful witness must extend to every area of life, every moment of life.

God wants you to be a truthful witness! That’s what Jesus asked us to do when He said, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Preach the good news about Jesus.” Be a truthful witness. Tell the truth about Jesus and His saving grace. Tell the truth about our loving Heavenly Father. Tell the truth about the events soon to come upon the earth. God wants you to be a truthful witness. A truthful witness saves lives. God wants you to be a lifesaver.

Stephen the deacon was a lifesaver. He was a truthful witness. Even when lying witnesses were testifying against him, Stephen continued to give a truthful witness. Even when his enemies were grinding their teeth in anger and hatred against him, Luke records in Acts 7:55-56 that Stephen, “full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ The religious leaders killed Stephen for that truthful witness. But that truthful witness saved at least one life. At least one person was saved as a result of Stephen’s truthful testimony. Who was that? Saul of Tarsus.

The truthful witness of Stephen was so powerful, so blessed by the Holy Spirit, that Saul of Tarsus had no rest until he had accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah and had surrendered his life

fully to Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Stephen's truthful witness saved a life. He was a lifesaver!

And that's what God wants for each one of us. He not only wants us not to be lying witnesses, people who give false testimonies. God wants us to be truthful witnesses. Lifesavers. Because truthful witnesses save lives.

Nathan was heading down the road to destruction. Many times he would open the throttle on his powerful German motorcycle and drive at death-defying speeds. One day, a former girlfriend gave a truthful testimony to Nathan. She had recently recommitted her life to Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. And she gave a truthful witness to her former boyfriend. He didn't have much choice but to listen. She was cutting his hair at the time, so he was something of a captive audience!

Nathan listened to that truthful witness. I met Nathan a few weeks later when he showed up in church. He came up to me after the church service and told me that he wanted to commit his life to Jesus as His Lord and Savior. Today, Nathan is a pastor, a preacher of the good news about Jesus. Nathan is a lifesaver. And all because a former girlfriend cared enough to be a truthful witness. If Nathan could be here today, he would testify that the words of Solomon are true: a truthful witness saves lives.

And we need more truthful witnesses who save lives, don't we. There are so many people all around who are about to perish and don't even know it! I read a remarkable story this past week about a man in Houston, Texas, who was driving his SUV along the side of Brays Bayou. Now for those of us who aren't from the south of the US, a bayou is a slow moving river that meanders through the lowlands and marshlands. This gentleman was driving his SUV on a

road that ran alongside the river. All seemed normal until the man made an abrupt left turn. That's when things got complicated. You see, there was no left turn. Only a grass shoulder and then the river. The man drove his SUV across the grass and straight into the river. His SUV ended up 30-40 feet from shore, submerged in about 10 feet of water. Fortunately, someone witnessed this strange occurrence and called for help. When the rescue squad arrived, what they found was stranger than fiction. When the divers went down to assess the situation, they noticed that the driver was still sitting calmly in his SUV. He seemed totally oblivious to the fact that he was under 10 feet of water!

The rescue divers were able to get into the SUV, tie a life preserver around the driver and bring him to safety. When I read that story, I thought to myself, "What a startling illustration of so many in our world today!" People are in a perilous situation and they don't even know it. They are totally oblivious to the danger all around them.

Someone needs to tell them the truth before it's too late. Remember, a truthful witness saves lives. Someone needs to be a lifesaver to them. I want to be a lifesaver, don't you?